

Subject: Gold King Mine Release - Regional Update #5

Date: 14 August 2015

Background

The Gold King Mine near Silverton, Colorado has a continuous discharge of acidic mine drainage that is a historic contributor of manganese, zinc, copper, and cadmium into the Cement Creek drainage of the Animas River watershed. On August 5, 2015, a large release of mine waste water into the upper portions of Cement Creek occurred. The volume of the release based on US Geological Survey (USGS) Cement Creek gauging station is estimated at three million gallons. The wastewater eventually entered the Animas River. EPA Region 9 is focused on assessing a stretch of the San Juan River extending from Farmington, NM to Mexican Hat, UT, and into Lake Powell.

Executive Summary

- R9 is conducting surface water sampling and sediment sampling along the San Juan River in the Navajo Nation at 11 monitoring sites.
- Surface water sampling is planned for Lake Powell
- The Navajo Tribal Utility Authority has initiated sampling of the three wells at Montezuma Creek and at the intake of the Mexican Hat surface water plant.
- EPA (R9) is paying for water hauling services to deliver water to areas served by wells on the NTUA – Montezuma Creek public water system which was shut down as a precaution

Unless specified otherwise all dates & times are in Pacific Daylight Time (PDT). For previous information please see the Documents Section of the operations website: www.epaossc.org/R9_SanJuanRiverResponse

Current Actions

Daily operations are focused around gathering water and sediment samples from 11 designated locations in the San Juan River. The Lake Powell Division of the ICP is overseeing sampling in the vicinity of Lake Powell.

Water trucks to address Navajo agricultural and livestock needs have been secured and will be continuing to deliver water to designated locations. The Unified Command has also identified a need on the Navajo reservation to provide feed for livestock.

Public meetings and outreach:

- Meetings today with Congresswoman Ann Kirkpatrick, the Mayor of Page, and Chamber of Commerce
- On-going public meetings

Personnel On-Site

6 R9 OSCs
1 R10 OSC
1 R9 PIO
5 R9 CIC
2 R9 LNC/LNO
4 USCG PST

Key Issues

- We don't expect impacts to Lake Powell but are waiting for sampling results to confirm
- Plume has visibly dissipated with major dilution factor entering Lake Powell
- Questions from the public and Navajo Nation agencies regarding whether water quality in San Juan River and Lake Powell is safe for drinking and recreational contact.